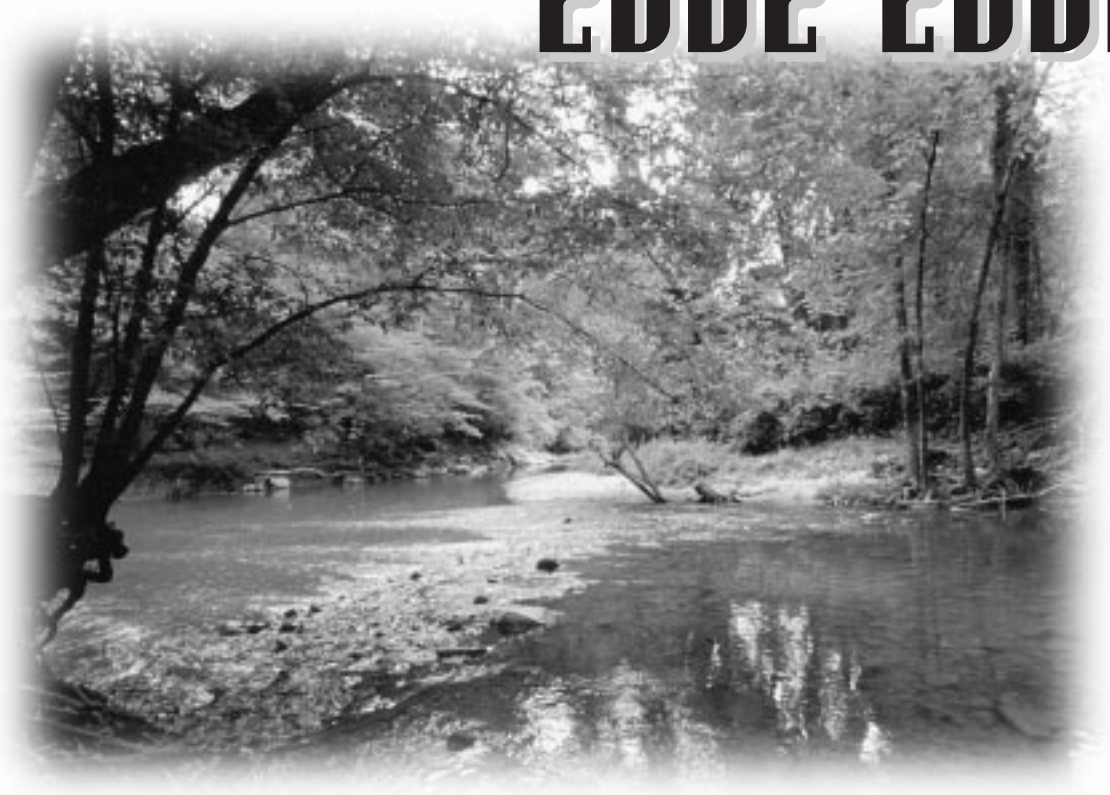


Fairfax County Park Authority

Strategic Plan 2002-2006



A Summary of Opportunity Areas
and
Strategies for the Future



REVISED FOR 2003





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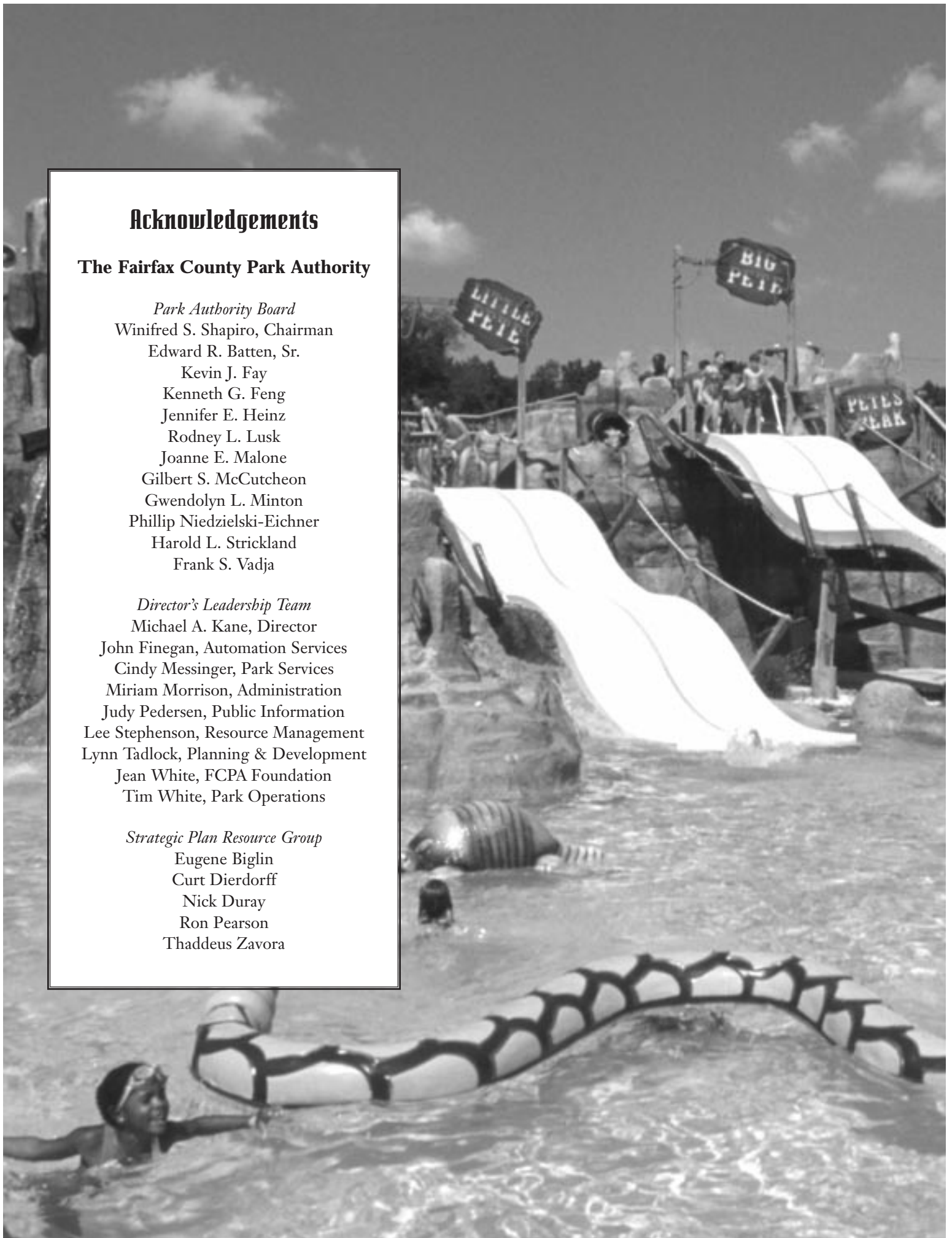
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Foreword

The Fairfax County Park Authority's 2002-2006 Strategic Plan is intended to be a tool to focus resources on the most critical work for the agency in the near future. The plan was built on extensive staff review, a series of community meetings and a countywide public opinion survey.

The environment in which the Park Authority operates is changing rapidly. Increasing urbanization, diversification and aging of the County's population base, the arrival of the Internet age and the maturation of the Park Authority's workforce - all of these factors will require adjustments in organization and approaches to service delivery. Residents expect continued improvement from us - faster service, greater use of technology and more productivity for their dollars. Community organizations expect us to be a creative and willing partner for their proposals.

If the Park Authority is to remain a vital part of the community, we must continually seek to adapt to change and develop strategies to thrive on new opportunities. This plan outlines the areas where the focused efforts of the entire organization will be required to meet the challenges of the near future. They are referred to as the six key strategic opportunity areas. An additional section, known as 'Emerging Issues' has also been added for 2003 to capture and address new issues that do not fit neatly into the original set of opportunity areas.



Our Mission, Vision & Values

Through the planning process the existing Park Authority mission statement was examined to ensure its current relevance and was reaffirmed. In support of the mission are new statements intended to express a vision and important agency values needed to carryout the mission over the next five years.

MISSION

To set aside public spaces for and assist citizens in the protection and enhancement of environmental values, diversity of natural habitats and cultural heritage to guarantee that these resources will be available to both present and future generations. To create and sustain quality facilities and services which offer citizens opportunities for recreation, improvement of their physical and mental well being, and enhancement of their quality of life.

VISION

The Fairfax County Park Authority strives to inspire and sustain a passion for parks and leisure experiences that enhance our community's quality of life.

VALUES

These values describe the essence of our organization:

Enhancing Stewardship - We are stewards for a wonderfully rich community trust of natural and cultural resources. We will provide leadership to expand awareness, appreciation and protection of this heritage.

Fostering Diversity - We embrace the diversity of our community and seek to provide every resident with a wide variety of park experiences and recreational opportunities.

Developing Partnerships - We believe seeking and maintaining active partnerships with neighborhood and community organizations and individuals is essential to becoming a vital and treasured component of the communities we serve.

Providing Quality & Value - We are committed to providing high quality facilities and services that offer superior value and prompt, efficient service to our customers and the community.

Communicating Effectively - We strive for productive two-way communication with residents and our staff to allow each to participate fully in creating quality parks and services.

Valuing Our Workforce - We believe our paid and volunteer staff is a key ingredient of our success and commit to creating a dynamic workplace offering career development and meaningful recognition.

Demonstrating Fiscal Responsibility - We are committed to building and preserving a park system that meets the community's needs in a cost effective, fiscally responsible manner.

Opportunity Area 1: Community Involvement



Issue 1 - Fostering Community Participation in Planning

The Park Authority believes it has an obligation to engage residents in the planning process for park facilities, services and programs. It is critical to reach out to a broad cross-section of residents, including minority populations, so that organized groups are not the only voices heard in the park planning and development process.

Strategies

- 1.1** Create and implement a plan to engage a broad and balanced cross-section of residents in planning for park facilities, services and programs, with emphasis on communicating with minority populations and utilizing a range of options for participation.
- 1.2** Create and implement a plan to communicate with community opinion leaders to keep them informed of important issues concerning the Park Authority.

Issue 2 - Developing a Consistent, Ongoing Research Program

A consistent, ongoing research program is vital to assess the demand for and supply of facilities, services and programs for park planning purposes. The last FCPA facility needs assessment was completed eight years ago and is now well out-of-date. While that 1994 analysis represented a good initial step, it had limitations: the supply analysis did not include privately provided outdoor recreation facilities and the demand survey component was too heavily weighted toward a limited list of outdoor recreation activities.

Strategies

- 2.1** Conduct a land and facilities needs assessment including an inventory of public and private facilities.
- 2.2** Establish a mechanism to assess demand for services and programs on a continuing basis.
- 2.3** Initiate efforts to collaborate with the Fairfax County Public Schools and other public leisure service providers to meet community needs.

Issue 3 - Focusing Community Outreach

Park Authority outreach to the community and to community-based organizations must be further developed and focused in order for the agency to become a full partner in the community. Strategic

Plan Stakeholder Group feedback revealed a desire for the Park Authority to become more community-based. In a related trend, the FCPA has begun to partner more aggressively with other county agencies in an effort to provide more effective and holistic solutions to community needs.

Strategies

- 3.1** Expand partnerships with community organizations, including schools, PTAs, corporations, athletic groups, homeowner associations, ethnic and cultural organizations, advisory groups and park friends groups.
- 3.2** Participate in Fairfax County's revitalization projects, in the County Executive's Neighborhood Initiative and in projects of the Department of Housing and Community Development to become a full partner in these community development efforts and to gain knowledge of communities and partnership opportunities.
- 3.3** Create a communications plan to share ideas and coordinate actions regarding external communications. The goal should be to focus communications around key messages and bring a consistent, recognizable identity to communication products.

Issue 4 - Facilitating Internet Communication

Internet communications may be the most powerful tool to close the gap between the 53% of residents who reported in the 2000 Strategic Plan Survey they were interested in participating in park planning versus the 12% who had actually participated. Seventy percent of Fairfax County households have a personal computer and 51% of households have Internet access at home. The Park Authority has an excellent web site that presently functions principally as a one-way information source. Two-way communication with web site users is an area of opportunity to facilitate convenient communication with residents.

Strategies

- 4.1** Keep pace with available web technology to improve the user's on-line experience and to expand opportunities for residents to enjoy the agency's resources from home.
- 4.2** Take steps to create a platform for greater two-way electronic communication with residents by gathering user addresses and interests in a format that can facilitate targeted outreach by the agency.

Opportunity Area 2: Stewardship



Issue 1 - Preserving Open Space

The remaining open space in Fairfax County and associated natural, cultural and horticultural resources are rapidly diminishing. While in past decades planners could take comfort that more opportunities to acquire parkland would be available if a particular parcel was lost, there are now precious few options to acquire new parkland. To create the broadest range of opportunities to preserve additional open space and to best utilize existing community open space, the Park Authority must utilize all possible means. The high level of community interest in gardening creates opportunities to involve residents with efforts to conduct beautification and education projects in parks and other public spaces. County efforts to revitalize aging communities present the Park Authority with new opportunities to acquire additional parkland.

Strategies

- 1.1** Pursue opportunities through open space easements, proffered dedications, acquisitions and partnerships to designate, preserve and protect additional open space - particularly land with significant natural, cultural or horticultural resources - throughout the county. Develop priorities for acquisition based on the deficiencies of various habitats or resources among current park holdings in comparison with those naturally occurring in Fairfax County.
- 1.2** *Note: this strategy has been incorporated into the tasks associated with strategy 3.1 in the Community Involvement opportunity area.*
- 1.3** Through the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, as well as organizations such as the Fairfax County Park Foundation Inc., the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, the Northern Virginia Regional Park Authority and other means, seek expansion through land donations and funding for open space preservation as parkland.
- 1.4** Participate in county revitalization projects to identify areas appropriate for resource and open space preservation, as well as passive and active recreation.
- 1.5** Work cooperatively with community groups to achieve public participation in the implementation of a countywide horticulture program that will improve the aesthetics and the environmental quality of open space through the development of public gardens, horticultural plantings and educational programs promoting responsible horticultural practices in an urban environment.

Issue 2 - Protecting Park Resources

County natural and cultural resources, including those on parkland, are beset by a range of environmental and other problems that are most often associated with development. Perpetual care of park and county artifacts is a continuing challenge. The Park Authority's responsibility to



preserve and protect park resources is stated in the agency's mission.

Strategies

- 2.1** Participate in county Environmental Coordinating Committee initiatives, as well as partnerships with other agencies and organizations, to address past and continuing development impacts on county and Park Authority lands, as well as restoration of degraded resources.
- 2.2** Complete an inventory of stormwater management facilities on parkland, evaluate the current condition and effectiveness of those facilities and determine appropriate maintenance responsibilities.
- 2.3** Expand efforts to create broader internal awareness of stewardship issues and responsibilities through new employee orientation, training and cooperative projects among divisions.
- 2.4** Create broader external awareness of stewardship issues among residents through on-line information, brochures, partnerships and other means.
- 2.5** Explore the most appropriate means to combine and properly preserve the nearly three million historic and archaeological artifacts in the agency's care, which are now stored in three separate locations without sufficient security or environmental controls.

- 2.6** Establish an inter-division team to evaluate how effectively the agency is incorporating natural and cultural resource protection in all aspects of park development, operations and maintenance and recommend appropriate changes, if necessary.

Issue 3 - Expanding Resource Management

Natural and cultural resource inventories are the basis of sound resource management, but the Park Authority lacks current resource inventories for the majority of its parks. Once inventory data is obtained, resource management plans should be created to guide management of the most critical or threatened resources. The data should also be used to identify priorities for future land acquisition. Currently the Park Authority has resource management plans for only a handful of parks. Staffing and other resources to complete necessary inventories and plans will pose a major challenge for the agency.

Strategies

- 3.1** Explore means of obtaining current natural and cultural resource inventory data for Fairfax County, including contractors, aerial photography interpretation, sharing data with other organizations, etc.
- 3.2** Explore means of creating resource management plans for the most critical or most threatened resources and habitats identified in inventories.
- 3.3** *Note: aspects of this strategy have been incorporated as tasks into strategies 2.6 and 3.2 of the Stewardship opportunity area.*
- 3.4** Seek the Board of Supervisors' support for General Fund budgetary resources to support resource inventories, management plans and implementation.
- 3.5** Complete an overall Natural Resource Management Plan for the Park Authority and present plan to the Park Authority Board for adoption.

Issue 4 - Resolving Encroachments

Parkland encroachments by neighbors, such as dumping of refuse and extension of private yards, are pervasive, resulting in degradation of park resources, diminished respect for park boundaries and the loss of significant acreage from public use. Such private encroachments onto public lands are a byproduct of suburban development and have been an enforcement challenge for the past four decades.

Strategies

- 4.1** Create and maintain an inventory and database of known encroachments.
- 4.2** Design and implement an effective process and assign necessary resources to promptly resolve current and future encroachment issues.
- 4.3** Provide information to citizens to increase the awareness of encroachment problems and encourage citizen participation in minimizing encroachment impacts.



Issue 5 - Combating Invasive Plants

Invasive plants threaten the ecological value of natural resources throughout Fairfax County and in most parks. Habitats in some parks, such as Huntley Meadows and the Marie Butler Levin Preserve, are seriously threatened. This issue is among those identified by the county's Environmental Coordinating Committee as serious problems requiring joint action. Traditional funding sources are inadequate to address this issue.

Strategies

5.1 Work with the county Environmental Coordinating Committee to establish a countywide program to address the most critical invasive plant issues and secure appropriate funding.

5.2 *This strategy has been incorporated into the tasks of Stewardship strategy 5.1 above.*

Issue 6 - Managing Wildlife Conflicts

Development increases the incidence and intensity of conflict between wildlife and people throughout the county. Over 1,000 deer are struck by vehicles in Fairfax County each year. Fairfax County has the highest incidence of rabies in the State of Virginia. Hundreds of residents complain each year that beaver have cut down ornamental lawn trees or flooded private property, or that deer and other wildlife eat large proportions of garden produce. Expanding numbers of resident Canada Geese are creating health hazards and damaging habitats at waterfront parks, golf courses and athletic fields.

These problems are often exacerbated by overpopulation of some wildlife species that thrive in suburban edge environments with open space and protective cover. For example, deer in Fairfax County are now often found in densities of more than 80 per square mile, while the county's Deer Management Plan recommends controlling deer population at a level of no more than 15 per square mile.

While park neighbors enjoy watching wildlife, they also often expect the Park Authority to



control the damage caused by wildlife in their community. The Park Authority has a nationally recognized Wildlife Conflict Resolution Policy that provides effective guidance in managing these issues.

Strategies

6.1 While continuing to apply the Wildlife Conflict Resolution Policy to Park Authority holdings: (1) pursue partnerships with other County agencies toward adoption of the FCPA's program countywide and (2) provide information to residents to increase awareness of the benefits and dangers of wildlife, the role of wildlife management and methods to peacefully coexist with wildlife.

6.2 *This strategy has been incorporated into the tasks of Stewardship strategy 6.1 above.*

Opportunity Area 3: Leisure Opportunities

Issue 1 - Adapting Offerings to Demographic Shifts

Anticipated demographic shifts suggest that the mix of Park Authority leisure offerings will need to evolve in the next several years. As just one example, many of the current offerings are targeted at children under age 10, a group projected to shrink in number in the coming decade. A recent analysis showed that 49% of

RECenter class enrollment comes from this age group. As the population in the aggregate continues to age, more recreational opportunities will need to be provided for teens and older adults. And as the population continues to diversify culturally, the Park Authority will need to ensure that it understands and meets the leisure service expectations of different segments of the community.



Strategies

- 1.1 Conduct targeted research among demographic segments of the population to ensure that the Park Authority understands the recreational preferences and service expectations of the various demographic groups that reside within the county
- 1.2 Seek to continually refine the Park Authority's range of recreational offerings to ensure that its customer base reflects the changing demographics of the county population.
- 1.3 Create funding and program offerings to capitalize on the impending aging of the population to the mutual benefit of both the Park Authority and its older clientele.

Issue 2 - Emphasizing Customer Retention

In some key program areas, such as golf and RECenter services, national data sources show that growth in activity participation is currently flat and has been for the better part of a decade. This implies that the Park Authority needs to refocus its efforts, which are currently weighted toward program development and new customer acquisition, and begin placing greater emphasis on strategies that build loyalty and retain existing customers.

Strategies

- 2.1 Develop systems to monitor and measure customer retention in key Revenue Fund service areas and document the cost of customer loss.
- 2.2 Determine and implement changes in organizational structure necessary to enhance customer loyalty and retention.
- 2.3 Identify retention targets and develop activities required to accomplish them.
- 2.4 Adapt existing facilities and programs in which the Park Authority has invested heavily to take advantage of emerging recreation trends, growth markets and revenue opportunities.
- 2.5 Identify specific maintenance and renovation needs that have an impact on customer satisfaction with revenue-based facilities and develop a plan for meeting them.

Issue 3 - Diversifying Fee-Based Recreational Offerings

Current revenues derived from fee-based recreational activities are more vulnerable to external factors beyond the Park Authority's control due to reliance on a limited number of activities. Golf courses and RECenters combined account for the lion's share of Fund 170 revenues - 86% in



FY2001. In addition, future revenues are currently not expected to grow fast enough to keep pace with known facility renovation/replacement and capital maintenance needs or provide the resources needed to expand and diversify recreational opportunities for the public.

Strategies

- 3.1** Analyze services in demand by citizens to determine which can be self-supporting in the Revenue Fund.
- 3.2** Based on the analysis in 3.1, implement appropriate services to meet recreational demand.
- 3.3** In the process of developing the Planning and Development Division's Annual Work Plan, identify facilities that should be developed on a fast-track schedule due to their high demand and ability to generate net income.

Issue 4 - Developing E-Commerce Opportunities

The technology and information systems the Park Authority uses to manage its recreational businesses are not fully equipped to keep pace with changing needs. The agency's ParkNet system was largely created to support internal business processes and, thereby,



improve management efficiency. Although these requirements will continue, they need to be augmented with systems that:

- Allow for more customer interactivity in service provision
- Better facilitate customer satisfaction/retention and loyalty

- Allow more two-way communication between the Park Authority and its customers
- Provide greater opportunities to serve the Park Authority's wide ranging clientele through the Internet

Strategies

- 4.1** Evaluate, identify and prioritize E-Commerce opportunities to serve the Park Authority's clientele in areas such as reservations, sales, customer feedback and complaint resolution and solicitation of new program ideas.
- 4.2** *This strategy has been incorporated into the tasks of Leisure Opportunities strategy 4.1 above.*
- 4.3** Evaluate current information systems in terms of their ability to meet current and future management information needs and develop a plan to meet critical gaps.

Issue 5 - Keeping Pace With Important Leisure Trends

As a rule, the Park Authority is conservative in its approach to recreational facility provision. It has not systematically monitored leisure trends and has sometimes been slow to adopt new kinds of facilities that are popular elsewhere. Recent examples include outdoor water parks, dog parks and skate parks, where well established trends were in evidence for a decade or more before Park Authority facilities were planned. Policies, processes and procedures for facility planning and development should be reviewed for changes that will facilitate quicker introduction of new recreation experiences. To best serve the community, the provision of facilities and services must keep pace with emerging leisure time trends and efforts must be made to ensure parity and balance in overall recreational offerings and fees for service.

Strategies

- 5.1** Establish both quantitative and qualitative means to continually monitor and provide a clearinghouse of information on national recreation trends that is readily available to



staff and from which the Park Authority Board can be informed of key trends annually.

- 5.2 Employ new technologies (in lighting, sports surfacing and other areas) to increase the utilization of existing athletic facilities to the extent possible without causing facility damage from overuse.
- 5.3 Work with the athletic community, other county agencies (DCRS, FCPS) and county policymakers to maximize the availability, accessibility and equitable distribution of FCPA athletic fields for all field sports.
- 5.4 Seek to set aside open play areas and create opportunities for more individual, unstructured recreational experiences that are not part of organized sports activities.
- 5.5 Increase access to stream valley parkland for passive recreational use.

Issue 6 - Investigating Community-Based Service Delivery

The Park Authority's recreational programs are largely comprised of site- and facility-based offerings and, as such, are inaccessible to some segments of the population. Data from both the strategic plan stakeholder meetings and survey indicated that the lack of transportation was a constraint to park use to a portion of those who live in the county. The survey also showed that affordable recreational services were a key component of quality of life for a large portion of the citizenry. At the same time, county

reorganization has resulted in a transfer of some recreational service delivery functions from the Department of Community and Recreational Services to the Park Authority. Successful integration of these new programming functions will require the Park Authority to adapt a more community-based approach to service delivery than it has been accustomed to in the past.

Strategies

- 6.1 Evaluate the recent consolidation with the Leisure Enterprise Division of the Department of Community and Recreation Services to maximize the programming efficiency of the newly combined operation.
- 6.2 Create opportunities to develop more community-based programming through partnerships with other entities and additional access to recreational offerings for low-income residents in ways that do not negatively impact the Revenue Fund.
- 6.3 *Note: tasks associated with this strategy were combined with Leisure Opportunities strategy 6.2 above.*
- 6.4 In cooperation with other county agencies, investigate public transportation options for patrons who are not utilizing parks due to lack of transportation.

Issue 7 - Expanding Opportunities for Public Participation in Natural and Cultural Resource Activities.

The Park Authority has not opened a new nature center or historic site museum in more than 20 years. Most existing natural and cultural resource programmatic opportunities are associated with existing nature centers and historic sites. As a result, existing facilities and program offerings reflect population concentrations of 20 years ago and are not well represented in more recently developed areas of the county. Community demand and support for natural and cultural resource programs remains strong and residents in newer areas of the county wish to have these services. Among the potential approaches to this issue are development of new facilities, increasing pro-

gram offerings in community-based settings, and creation of partnerships with other organizations.

Strategies

- 7.1** Explore expansion of programmatic opportunities for natural and cultural resource offerings in under-served areas of the county.

Opportunity Area 4: Financial Framework

Issue 1 - Creating a Comprehensive Annual Fund Management Plan

Five separate funds comprise the Park Authority's budget. The five funds include two for operations - the General Fund (001) and the Park Revenue Fund (170). There are three funds for capital improvements and construction - the County Construction Fund (303), the Park Authority Bond Construction Fund (370) and the Park Capital Improvement Fund (371).

Two of the funds, the General Fund and County Construction Fund, are supported by county taxes. The Park Authority Bond Construction Fund is supported by the sale of general obligation bonds that are approved by voters and repaid by taxpayers over the life of the bonds. The Park Revenue Fund and the Park Capital Improvement Fund are supported by user fees.

The Park Revenue Fund normally provides some net revenue from user fees that can be utilized for facility repair, renovations and new program initiatives. A portion of these funds is typically kept as managed reserves in the Park Capital Improvement Fund. Current revenue projections show the Revenue Fund's ability to meet such needs declining to less than \$500,000 per year on average.²⁹ Historically, significant growth in the Revenue Fund has come from periodic infusions of capital funding for revenue-producing recreational facilities. The current 10-year planning horizon lacks sufficient capital investment in new recreational facilities to maintain traditional levels of growth in the Revenue Fund.

Current fiscal planning is focused primarily at the

fund level. What has been missing is an overarching fund management plan that balances use of funds with current and future agency objectives. Without such planning, it is difficult to integrate operational and capital development initiatives to achieve the agency's overall strategic objectives.

Strategies

- 1.1** Develop an annual agency fund management plan that provides a comprehensive view of the Park Authority's five major funding sources. The elements of the plan should include projected internal and external conditions, citizen expectations for services, priorities for action and funding strategies.
- 1.2** Determine appropriate funding levels for each funding source to meet requirements.
- 1.3** Link existing fee policies and practices to more closely correspond with operating financial management objectives adopted by the Park Authority.

Issue 2 - Expanding Non-Traditional Funding

Potential funding to expand service delivery may exist from numerous sources the Park Authority has not fully explored. Options include endowments with donated property, loans from sources other than general obligation bonds and revenue bonds, the Fairfax County Park Foundation Inc., private ventures, corporate partnerships and state funding. Such funds can be used to augment various aspects of the Park Authority's mission, freeing some traditional funding for essential acquisition, development, operations and maintenance responsibilities.

Strategies

- 2.1** Allocate appropriate resources and develop a structure to effectively pursue non-tax-based funding sources not traditionally used by the agency.
- 2.2** Seek to expand current zoning ordinances and state laws to require developers to adequately compensate the county for increased impacts to recreational facility demand.



Issue 3 - Securing Operational Funding for New Parks

Budgetary support for annual operation and maintenance has not increased in relation to the increase in FCPA property, facilities and services. This is partly due to the lack of a budgetary process to link approved land acquisition and capital facility developments with the need for additional operational funding once parks are acquired and facilities come on-line. For new parks and facilities in the General Fund (tax supported) portion of the Park Authority's budget, the absence of such a link means a lengthy lag in funding while the facility is considered in the county budget process. In addition, the Park Authority must compete with many other community needs for these additional operating funds.

Strategies

- 3.1** Work with county policy makers, senior management and budget staff to establish a link between approved land acquisition and capital facility development and the need for future operational funding to support new park operation, maintenance and resource management.
- 3.2** Take appropriate steps to establish a budget category to fund stabilization and operating costs of new acquisitions until funds for the property come on line in the budget.



Opportunity Area 5: Infrastructure and Capital Sustainability

Issue 1 - Creating a Lifecycle Replacement Program

Faced with an aging system, the Park Authority lacks an active life cycle replacement program for infrastructure and capital facilities. It also lacks an identified source of funding for these replacement needs.

Strategies

- 1.1** Develop a life cycle replacement program for all infrastructure and capital facilities.
- 1.2** Identify funding requirements for the most immediate infrastructure and capital facilities needs prior to development of the 2004 park bond referendum.

Issue 2 - Enhancing Short- and Long-Term Maintenance Support

The Park Authority must have a clear picture of short- and mid-term maintenance requirements, as well as a comprehensive strategy to match categories of need (buildings/facilities, playgrounds, athletic courts, athletic fields, roads/parking, trails, equipment) with available funding sources (County General Fund 001, County Construction Fund 303, Park Capital Improvement Fund 371, Park Revenue Fund 170, and Grants and Donations).

Strategies

- 2.1** Develop a more comprehensive schedule of FCPA short- and mid-term needs for maintenance, equipment and repairs that matches the categories of need with the categories of potential funding.
- 2.2** Work with the County Executive, the Division of Management and Budget, and the Board of Supervisors to obtain consistent funding from the County Construction Fund

303 commensurate with maintenance and renovation needs at park facilities.

- 2.3** Work with the County Executive, the Division of Management and Budget and the Department of Vehicle Services to incorporate current FCPA vehicles and operating equipment replacement in the County Replacement Fund.
- 2.4** Expand and update the data inventories in the Maintenance Management System (MMS) to enhance the usefulness of the software to the agency.

Opportunity Area 6: Capacity for Growth and Change

Issue 1 - Attracting and Retaining a High Quality Workforce

Demographic changes in the community and the Park Authority's workforce will necessitate a focus on leadership development and continued efforts to recruit and retain a culturally diverse staff. Ensuring that employees have the required competency to be highly successful in the future operating environment will require human capital investments through paid and volunteer staff training, career development and intern programs. Incentives for employee retention need to include a positive work environment that empowers individuals to utilize their competencies to perform work without unnecessary constraints. Staff should receive timely and honest feedback on their performance, open and complete communication about events affecting their work, recognition and competitive total compensation.



Strategies

- 1.1** Develop a new employee orientation program that creates a sense of excitement among new hires about the Park Authority's mission, vision and values.
- 1.2** Establish a paid and volunteer staff workforce planning process to determine future recruitment needs based on changes to mission priorities and the workforce. Implement recruitment strategies for paid and volunteer staff to meet projected needs.
- 1.3** Establish competency models for leadership positions, and key mission and administrative positions. Use competency models to drive succession planning, leadership development, career management and functional knowledge development.
- 1.4** Conduct a training needs survey to determine the aggregate training needs for the future. Develop and implement a training plan based on priorities for the future.
- 1.5** Create policies and processes to improve workforce diversity at all levels and attain a workforce that reflects the diversity of the county. Develop effective strategies to retain and develop staff recruited from diverse populations.
- 1.6** Provide staff training to enhance skills in effectively serving a culturally diverse customer base and workforce.

Issue 2 - Aligning Organization to Strategic Priorities

Organizational structure, roles and authorities may need to be realigned to allow implementation of the strategic priorities identified in this plan. Actions should be taken at the outset to identify and implement organizational changes needed to align the agency around its strategic priorities and allow it to focus its resources on achieving them.

Strategies

- 2.1** Communicate vision and strategic priorities

to all employees and volunteers to facilitate a shared vision of the Park Authority's mission, strategy and supporting behaviors.

- 2.2** Conduct a senior management review to ensure that the current organizational structure is adequate to carry out the priorities identified in the plan and implement any changes as needed.
- 2.3** Conduct an annual review of the agency strategic plan to measure accomplishments, update and modify action plans and focus resources on the most important mission priorities.
- 2.4** Evaluate the strategic planning process and its impact on the organization.

Issue 3 - Creating a Culture of Leadership That Supports High Performance

The Park Authority's operating environment is becoming increasingly demanding as new facilities, programs and community needs are introduced at the same time that available resources are constrained. To prosper in this environment, it is necessary that all employees and volunteers are equipped to optimize their contribution. Each employee should be given information that enables them to have a clear understanding of performance expectations and receive appropriate recognition for their contribution to achieving mission and strategic goals. All staff members should be well informed about agency policies and issues and provided an opportunity to have input to agency decisions that affect them so that decisions reflect the best thinking of the entire organization. Leaders at all levels of the organization need to be equipped to implement practices and techniques that enable employees to utilize their talents and achieve their full potential.

Strategies

- 3.1** Align job assignments and rewards and recognition to reinforce teamwork, risk taking, innovation and alignment with Park Authority strategic priorities.
- 3.2** Conduct training for agency leadership,

beginning with senior management, on effective change management.

- 3.3** Conduct a workforce survey to identify the barriers to increased innovation, teamwork and commitment. Review survey results to identify appropriate actions.
- 3.4** Develop and implement a communication strategy to foster a well-informed workforce relating to key organizational issues and decisions.
- 3.5** Align agency performance measurements, performance elements and goals to reflect strategic plan goals that are appropriate given individual responsibilities.
- 3.6** Prepare FCPA leaders to implement the county's High Performance Organizations (HPO) model.

Issue 4 - Improving Tools for Workforce Management

Provide tools to increase the capacity for workforce management and leverage knowledge. Managers and staff need to have access to timely and accurate workforce information in order to make the best decisions about staff utilization and development. Workforce knowledge is a valuable asset that should be leveraged by making it accessible in real time to all employees.

Strategies

- 4.1** Seek improved ways of making more extensive use of county corporate MIS systems to manage Park Authority staff resources. Develop databases and information tools that provide managers with easy access to information to accomplish financial and workforce planning and determine appropriate workforce management actions.
- 4.2** Investigate how the Park Authority could benefit from a knowledge management process to capture, categorize and exploit workforce knowledge in key business, management and functional areas.



Issue 5 - Planning, Operating and Maintaining Complex, Multi-Disciplinary Facilities

Over its 50 plus years, the Park Authority has developed highly specialized units within the organization to plan, develop, maintain and operate the park system. Historically, each of these units has operated its respective responsibility areas somewhat independently. The recent acquisition of two large and varied tracts of land – the 1,700 acre Hunter Hacor tract in western Fairfax County and the 1,800 acre Laurel Hill tract in the eastern end of the county – will prompt the need for a different approach. The extraordinary scope and scale of these two properties will require greater application of multi-disciplinary problem solving than has been required in the past. An example of this multi-disciplinary approach to service delivery can already be seen in the planning for the West County RECenter, where nature interpretation/education activities will take place alongside the more traditional recreation and fitness functions.

Strategies

- 5.1 Responsible planning** - develop plans for these properties that best accommodate community needs, in keeping with their physical and environmental constraints and in conformance with the County Comprehensive Plan.
- 5.2 Responsive implementation** - work collaboratively with public and private partners in stewardship and development activities, as needed, to accommodate approved interim and permanent adaptive uses.

5.3 Efficient transition - accomplish tasks, as needed to provide stabilization, maintenance and basic security of resources as required.

5.4 Effective team management - utilize the networked talent model to organize project teams for planning these properties, including core team members from each of the agency's divisions, the senior leadership team and task teams to optimize the development process.

Emerging Issues

This section of the plan was created in 2003 to capture evolving issues that do not fit the confines of the six opportunity areas that comprised the original plan. One issue area concerning the impact of future air quality restrictions was added for 2003. Others may be added in the future as needed.

Issue 1 - Maintaining Efficient Operations Within the Confines of Air Quality Restrictions

The Washington metropolitan region is facing new restrictions to achieve air quality requirements. The Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and the County Executive have committed Fairfax County government to play a leadership role in meeting this challenge. The Park Authority has a special opportunity to contribute, given its dual mission to operate facilities, while preserving the environment and natural resources. Park Authority operations provide a highly-visible laboratory to demonstrate responsible operating methods, while increasing public understanding of this important community issue.

Strategies

- 1.1** Plan and execute modifications of agency operations as required to meet requirements of state and county air quality restrictions.
- 1.2** Identify and carry out opportunities to provide leadership within Fairfax County government and the community for operating policies and procedures to promote regional air quality.